

This article was downloaded by: [MGIMO-University]

On: 11 July 2014, At: 03:54

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Journal of European Integration

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/geui20>

### The Impact of National Business Cultures on Large Firm Lobbying in the European Union: Evidence from a Large-Scale Survey of Government Affairs Managers

Andrew Barron <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Management , Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde , Glasgow, UK

Published online: 17 Aug 2011.

To cite this article: Andrew Barron (2011) The Impact of National Business Cultures on Large Firm Lobbying in the European Union: Evidence from a Large-Scale Survey of Government Affairs Managers, Journal of European Integration, 33:4, 487-505, DOI: [10.1080/07036337.2011.579752](https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2011.579752)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2011.579752>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms &



---

ARTICLE

---

# The Impact of National Business Cultures on Large Firm Lobbying in the European Union: Evidence from a Large-Scale Survey of Government Affairs Managers

ANDREW BARRON

*Department of Management, Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK*

**ABSTRACT** This paper reports research into cross-national differences in corporate lobbying in the European Union (EU). Original data collected through an online survey, conducted between April and June 2010, of 132 government affairs managers in large firms are analysed to ascertain the extent their political activities are influenced by the national business cultures in which they were socialised. Findings indicate significant relationships between (1) respondents' culturally-grounded attitudes towards time and their level of engagement with policy-makers, and (2) their culturally-conditioned attitudes towards power and hierarchy and their choice of political tactics when seeking to promote their political interests. Contrary to expectations, no significant relationship was found between respondents' cultural preferences for acting autonomously or within a group, and their level of participation in the policy-making process. The research makes important contributions to the literature on Europeanization as well as to research into the internationalisation of corporate political strategising.

**KEY WORDS:** Corporate political activity, European Union, cultural differences

## Introduction

The European Union (EU) and its decision-making processes have been a source of interest for academic scholars across many disciplines. In political

---

Correspondence Address: Andrew Barron, Department of Management, Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde, 199 Cathedral Street, Glasgow, G4 0QU, UK.  
E-mail: andrew.barron@strath.ac.uk

science, early studies focused on the creation of supranational institutions at the EU level. These studies treated the EU as an entity 'above' the member states, created from 'bottom up' processes stemming from the objectives and actions of national governments. Over time, studies began to explore the 'top-down' effects of European integration on the domestic arenas of the member states. Against this background of perceived increasing Europeanisation, scholars have investigated whether the EU and its institutions have modified the policies, practices and preferences of political, economic and social actors in the member states (e.g., Kassim and Menon 1996; Schmidt 1996; Bulmer and Burch 1998; Lehmkuhl 2000; Cole and Drake 2000; Cowles, Caporaso, and Risse 2001; Ladrech 2001; H  ritier *et al.* 2001; Fairbrass and Jordan 2002).

Within the Europeanisation debate, some researchers have specifically investigated the effects of European integration on interest representation. Some have argued that we are witnessing a convergence of national lobbying traditions towards a European model of interest representation (e.g., Mazey and Richardson 1993). Others contend that national differences in lobbying practices persist and can be clearly observed on the European political stage (e.g., Waarden 1993; Lanza  co 1992). This paper builds on this ongoing debate by testing in the EU context a cross-cultural model of corporate political action that, to date, has been subjected to only limited empirical scrutiny (Barron 2010). A more rigorous testing of this model, using original data collected via a large-scale survey of politically active managers socialised in a wide range of culturally diverse countries, makes three primary contributions to the existing literature on interest representation in the EU context.

First, whereas the prior research into interest representation has focused on the somewhat vague notion of national traditions, this paper actively engages with national business cultures, broadly understood as the socially transmitted behaviour patterns, norms, beliefs and values of a given community (Salacuse 1998) which are shared by members of a given society, lie at the core of behaviour, differ between nations, but are stable within them (Hofstede 2001; Schein 1985). This focus on business culture is important since management scholars have demonstrated that national culture impacts on many different individual level outcomes, including perceptions, beliefs and behaviours (e.g., Leung *et al.* 2005).

This focus on individuals represents the second contribution of the research. Crucially, whilst much of the existing research into interest representation in the EU context has focused attention on the firm level, industry level and institutional level antecedents of interest representation, the emphasis of this contribution is placed firmly on individual managers, and specifically on the national cultural milieus in which they are socialised. Such a focus is important since it allows strategic interest representation behaviours to be unpacked and examined at a deeper, more complex, human level. It also makes sense insofar as firms' political strategies are ultimately formulated by managers, including government affairs staff and politically active chief executive officers.

Third, the paper seeks to connect the literatures of political science and strategic management by innovatively applying to the EU political context of interest representation some theoretical insights drawn from existing research in the field of corporate political activity and the broad literature on international and cross-cultural management to test hypotheses about political actions pursued by government affairs managers in the EU context. The hypotheses generated specifically focus on (1) the extent to which politically active managers engage with EU policy-makers, (2) their preferred forms of political action and (3) their choices of political tactics when entering the European political arena.

Following on from this introduction, this paper first summarises a conceptual model and sets of hypotheses developed to emphasise how culturally-grounded management techniques and preferences can determine managers' political behaviours. Next, it describes an online survey of government affairs managers that was used to test these hypotheses. The methods of data analysis and results of the survey are presented in the fourth section. The paper closes off with a discussion of the results, and proposes future avenues of enquiry.

### **Conceptual Model and Hypotheses**

Corporate political activity (CPA), defined by Getz (1997, 32) 'as any deliberate action taken by firms to influence governmental policy or process', has attracted considerable scholarly attention (for meta reviews of the prior literature, see Getz, 1997 and 2001 and Hillman *et al.* 2004). However, as in the lion's share of research into international business and management, mainstream researchers of international CPA have adopted what Child (2000) has referred to as a 'low context' research perspective. In other words, researchers have tended to be insensitive towards national business cultures as analytically significant contexts, choosing instead to explain differences in corporate political activity using conceptual models (based, for example, on interest group theory, resource dependency theory, institutional theory, agency theory, the behavioural theory of the firm, collective action theory, transaction cost theory, and public choice theory) that were developed by North American scholars specifically for the North American political context.

However, drawing on an ever-growing body of academic work showing that managers socialised in different national cultures approach strategic decision-making in different ways (e.g., Harris and Ghauri 2000; Schneider 1989; House *et al.* 2004), some initial attempts have been undertaken to develop and test more culturally sensitive conceptual models for understanding the effects of national culture on corporate political actions. One such model is developed by Barron (2010). A simplified version of this model is presented in schematic form in Figure 1.

The model is underpinned by three key assumptions. First, it assumes that managers face specific strategic choices when they enter the political arena: They must choose (a) their general approach to political action, (b) their level of participation in the policy-making process, and (c) the

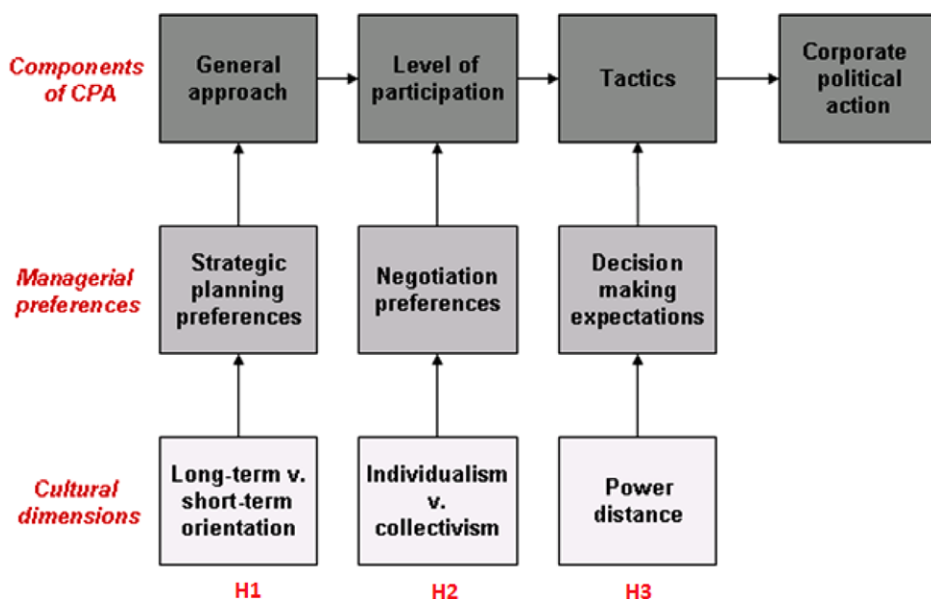


Figure 1. A cross-cultural model of corporate political activity (adapted from Barron 2010)

specific tactics to use when seeking to influence policy-makers. Second, it assumes that how managers respond to each of these choices is respectively driven by their preferences and expectations concerning strategic planning horizons, negotiation, and decision-making processes. These managerial preferences and expectations underpinning corporate political strategizing are finally assumed to be affected by national business cultures. Below, the different components of the model are unpacked to develop hypotheses that more clearly illustrate how the different components of corporate political activity are affected by national culture.

#### *National Cultures' Impact on Managers' General Approach to Political Action*

The model draws on the work of Hillman and Hitt (1999) in assuming that managers face a number of strategic choices in the political arena. The first such choice involves deciding upon a general approach to corporate political strategising. Essentially, managers decide whether to engage transactionally or relationally with policy-makers: Transactional engagement involves waiting for specific public policy issues to develop before entering into short-term relationships with policy-makers to influence their decisions; relational engagement involves fostering more longer-term relationships with policy-makers and have in place the necessary contacts and resources whenever policy issues arise.

These different general approaches imply that political strategising involves long-term strategic planning (relational) and short-term strategic planning (transactional). The literatures of international and cross-cultural management point to cross-country preferences in such strategic planning

horizons. For example, using the long-term versus short-term cultural dimension developed by Hofstede and Bond (1988) to measure the importance attached by members of a national culture to attaining results immediately or over the long run, Carr and Harris (2004) found that managers socialised in the long-term orientated cultures of Germany and Japan focused on long-term strategic success over a period of 15 years. By contrast, managers socialised in short-term orientated cultures of the UK and the US framed their strategic objectives in two- or three-year terms.

Assuming that managers' choices of general approach to political action (transactional versus relational) are driven by their strategic planning preferences, which are in turn influenced by culturally-conditioned attitudes towards time, it is first hypothesised that:

- *H1: Managers socialised in short-term orientated national cultures will be more likely to engage transactionally with policy-makers, whilst managers socialised in long-term orientated national cultures will be more likely to engage relationally with policy-makers.*

#### *National Cultures' Impact on Managers' Participation Level in Policy-Making*

A second choice facing managers in the political arena is their level of participation in the policy-making arena (Hillman and Hitt 1999). This involves deciding whether to pursue political actions alone or with the political representatives of other firms. The model presented in Figure 1 specifically assumes that negotiation preferences play a key role in determining managers' preferred level of participation: Rather than blindly complying with proposed legislation, it is assumed that managers bargain for special consideration from policy-makers whenever they consider conformity with legislation problematic (e.g., Oliver 1991; Boddewyn and Brewer 1994). The model specifically assumes that managers can choose to negotiate such concessions with policy-makers independently, or they can choose to negotiate collaboratively by joining forces with managers from other firms.

Scholars of cross-cultural management have identified cross-country variations in negotiation behaviour using Hofstede's dimension of individualism versus collectivism, which measures the extent to which the members of a given culture prefer acting autonomously or in groups. Specifically, studies (e.g., Drake 2001; Cai, Wilson, and Drake 2006) have shown that managers socialised in individualistic countries tend to view negotiation in competitive terms, and negotiate alone for individual benefit. By contrast, managers socialised in more collectivist cultures generally view negotiation in collaborative terms, and negotiate collaboratively for common benefits.

Of course, research has empirically demonstrated that managers from individualistic cultures such as the United States engage in collective political action (e.g., Getz 1993; Schuler and Rehbein 1997), and that managers from collectivist countries such as China engage in individual political action (e.g., Kennedy 2008). However, much in the same way that citizens from countries reflecting average individualistic tendencies generally consider

negotiation as a competitive exercise, the model suggests that managers socialised in such countries will have a cultural disposition for individual action. Similarly, managers socialised in collectivist national cultures will, on average, have a cultural preference for collective action.

Thus, assuming that managers' choices of participation level in the policy-making process (individual action versus collective action) are informed by preferred negotiation behaviours, and assuming that such behaviours are shaped by culturally informed preferences for achieving individual or collective objectives, it is hypothesised that:

- *H2: Managers socialised in individualistic national cultures will be more likely to engage in individual political action, whilst managers socialised in collectivist national cultures will be more likely to engage in collective political action.*

### *National Cultures' Impact on Managers' Choice of Political Tactics*

In accordance with Hillman and Hitt (1999), the model assumes that managers face a third strategic choice, namely the specific tactics to deploy for influencing policy-makers' decisions. Two tactics identified by Hillman and Hitt (1999) are the information strategy and the constituency-building strategy. Information strategies involve issuing position papers and technical briefs or making contributions to public consultations in order to communicate their policy preferences and concerns directly to specific policy-makers. Constituency-building strategies involve designing wider-reaching public relations campaigns that generate grassroots support for their concerns amongst voters, who in turn express their policy concerns and preferences to political decision-makers.

In her review of existing CPA literature, Getz (1997) stated that managers, when developing their political strategies, will choose tactics that are aimed at those people whom they believe have the power to make policy decisions that help resolve the specific issues they face. Accordingly, the model supposes that direct information strategies targeted specifically at policy-makers will be preferred by managers who consider that the power to make political decisions resides solely with policy-makers. By contrast, the more indirect constituency-building strategies aimed at wider publics will be favoured by managers who consider decision-making power to be more widely spread across society.

The literature on cross-cultural and international management highlights cross-country differences regarding who is involved in decision-making and who ultimately has decision-making power. These variations have been explained using Hofstede's cultural dimension of power distance, which describes the extent to which the members of a given culture accept power hierarchy and inequality to be legitimate. A number of studies (e.g., Harris *et al.* 2006; Erez 1994; Triandis 1994; Sagie and Koslowsky 2000) have found that decision-making responsibility is widely spread in power-distance rejecting national cultures and concentrated in the hands of a limited number of individuals in power-distance accepting national cultures.



Other studies (e.g., Kohler-Koch 1997; Schmidt 1999; Eising 2003) suggest that high power distance scores are associated with statist countries (e.g., France, Greece). Although pressure from the public might lead in these countries to changes in decisions taken by political elites, statist systems continue, despite international, European and domestic pressures, to be marked by a rather authoritative role of the state (Wright 1997). Thus, political decisions tend to be made by ruling elites of likeminded politicians, civil servants and businessmen who attended the same prestigious education establishments. The same studies suggest that lower power distance scores are associated with more corporatist (e.g., Austria, Germany) or pluralist countries (e.g., UK, USA) where, compared to statist countries, political decisions tend to be made by policy-makers in consultation with other social and economic actors, including firms, trade unions and representatives of civil society.

Whilst acknowledging that the use of one particular political tactic does not necessarily preclude another (Hillman and Hitt 1999), the model assumes that managers' use of information or constituency-building strategies depends on their expectations regarding who has the authority to influence political decisions, and assumes that these expectations are themselves affected by culturally-conditioned attitudes towards power and hierarchy. As result, the final hypothesis is:

- *H3a: Managers socialised in power-distance accepting national cultures will be more likely to use information strategies managers socialised in power-distance rejecting national cultures will be more likely to use constituency-building strategies.*

In summary, the model first suggests that managers' choices of general approach to political action (i.e., relational versus transactional approaches) are affected by their strategic planning preferences, which themselves are influenced by culturally bound time orientations (H1). Second, the model states that managers' level of participation in the policy-making process (individual versus collective action) is influenced by negotiation behaviours, which are determined by culturally-conditioned attitudes towards achieving individual or collective objectives (H2). Finally, it suggests that managers' decisions to deploy information and constituency-building strategies are informed by their culturally-conditioned expectations regarding who has the authority to influence political decisions, (H3).

## Methodology

These hypotheses were tested using data collected from a survey of European Government Affairs Managers conducted in April–June 2010. Potential respondents were identified using the European Public Affairs Directory, the European Commission's register of interest representatives, the list of lobbyists accredited by the European Parliament, and the Permanent Representations of individual member states. Additional contacts were also made through the European Affairs Network and International

Government Relations and Public Affairs groups on LinkedIn, the professional networking site.

The survey was distributed via e-mail to a total of 1358 managers. Spam filters and incorrect email addresses made it necessary to exclude 179 addresses. The survey was sent out for the first time at the end of April 2010, followed by four reminders sent out at two-week intervals. Guarantees of confidentiality were made to encourage respondents to participate in the research. Notwithstanding these guarantees, the survey rendered 132 eligible responses, representing a final response rate of 11.19% (1358–178/100). Table 1 summarizes information about the nationalities of respondents.

A combination of factors can potentially explain the low response rate. First of all, the survey was administered during the economic and financial crisis of 2007–2010 when government affairs managers were focusing their priorities on tackling the difficult economic and financial climate in which they were operating. In this regard, some managers contacted us, stating that they did not have time to participate in such a research project. Moreover, the potentially sensitive nature of some of the survey questions may also have dissuaded potential respondents from participating. Indeed, one French and one German manager phoned to explain that it was company policy not to share such strategic information with outsiders. These incidents echo the work of other researchers (Wilson 1988; Bunel 1995; Stevens 2003) in demonstrating that lobbyists, particularly in a European context, are reticent to release into the public domain any information on their political strategies for fear of weakening their positions vis-à-vis the government or rivals.

## Results

### *Development of Measurements and Descriptive Data*

In a first step, it was necessary to identify variations in respondents' cultural backgrounds. Respondents were identified as belonging to (1) long-term or short-term-orientated cultures, (2) collectivist or individualist cultures, and (3) low or high power distances in accordance with the country scores reported by Hofstede (2001). For all cultural dimensions, a dichotomous, categorical variable was created, using as the measure of central tendency (and thus the cut-off point) the mid-point of respondents' country scores. For example, to determine whether respondents belonged to a long-term or a short-term-orientated national culture, a variable called *Time orientation* was created using the scores calculated by Hofstede for respondents' home countries along the cultural dimension of long-term versus short-term orientation. Based on the data collected during the survey, respondents' scores ranged from 24 (for Irish respondents) to 83 (for German respondents). Taking 59 to be the measure of central tendency, respondents were subsequently split into two groups. The first group gathered respondents from countries with a relatively short-term cultural orientation (with scores ranging from 24 to 58). The second group assembled those respondents from countries with a comparatively longer-term

Table 1. Survey respondents by country and national culture of origin (country scores based on Hofstede 2001)

Time orientation	Short-term orientated cultures (24–58)		Long-term orientated cultures (59–83)	
	Country	Respondents	Country	Respondents
Individualism	Ireland	3	Austria	4
	United States	3	Estonia	1
	Denmark	7	Italy	8
	Norway	1	France	16
	Canada	2	Netherlands	8
	Finland	8	Bulgaria	1
	Greece	1	Czech Republic	1
	Spain	6	Switzerland	2
	Great Britain	18	Belgium	10
	Romania	2	Germany	11
	Sweden	16		
	Croatia	2		
	Hungary	1		
	Total: 70		Total: 62	
Individualism	Collectivist cultures (30–61)		Individualistic cultures (62–91)	
	Country	Respondents	Country	Respondents
	Bulgaria	1	Norway	1
	Croatia	2	Denmark	7
	Greece	1	Belgium	10
	Spain	6	Italy	8
	Austria	4	Netherlands	8
	Czech Republic	1	Canada	2
	Estonia	1	Great Britain	18
	Hungary	1	United States	3
	Romania	2		
	Finland	8		

(Continued)

Table 1. (*Continued*)

Time orientation	Short-term orientated cultures (24–58)		Long-term orientated cultures (59–83)	
	Country	Respondents	Country	Respondents
	Germany	11		
	Switzerland	2		
	Ireland	3		
	Sweden	16		
	France	16		
	Total: 75		Total: 57	
Power distance	Power-distance rejecting cultures (11–37)		Power-distance accepting cultures (38–90)	
	Country	Respondents	Country	Respondents
	Austria	4	Netherlands	8
	Denmark	7	Canada	2
	Ireland	3	Estonia	1
	Norway	1	Hungary	1
	Sweden	16	Czech Republic	1
	Finland	8	United States	3
	Switzerland	2	Italy	8
	Great Britain	18	Spain	6
	Germany	11	Greece	1
			Belgium	10
			France	16
			Bulgaria	1
			Croatia	2
			Romania	2
	Total: 70		Total: 62	

cultural orientation (with scores ranging from 59 to 83). Table 1 reports the dichotomisation and corresponding cut-off points for the other cultural dimensions. Such dichotomisation may suggest that the research relies on aggregated and simplified variables. However, as per Hofstede (2001), such approximations of underlying cultural characteristics are appropriate for cross-cultural analysis. Furthermore, given the low response rate, categorizing respondents into more than two cultural groups (e.g., extremely collectivist, somewhat collectivist, somewhat individualistic, extremely individualistic) would have led to situation whereby cultural groupings contained insufficient members for meaningful data analysis.

The variable used to measure respondents' general approach to political action was created from questions asking respondents to describe their relationships with representatives of (a) their national governments/parliaments, (b) other national governments/parliaments, (c) their own country's permanent EU representation, (d) other countries' permanent EU representations, (e) the European Commission, (f) the Council of Ministers, and (g) the European Parliament. Specifically, respondents were asked to describe their relationships using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from mostly as ad-hoc relationships covering specific policy issues to mostly as long-term relationships covering multiple policy issues). The data collected were subsequently aggregated to create a dichotomous, categorical variable measuring respondents' average engagement with policy-makers (whereby zero represented mostly short-term, issue-specific relationships (points one, two, and three on the Likert scale) and one represented mostly long-term, issue-spanning relationships (points four and five on the Likert scale)).

Respondents' preferred level of participation in the policy-making process was measured using a survey question asking them to indicate on a five-point scale (ranging from never to frequently) how often they (a) represented their political interests alone, (b) joined coalitions of interests, (c) participated in national level business associations, and (d) joined European level business association. Given that they are invariably temporary in character and frequently involve arms-length co-operation, coalitions of interests were considered for the purposes of this research more as a form of individual than collective political action. The average frequencies with which managers engaged in each of these different forms of political action were subsequently used to create a variable measuring their average level of participation in the policy-making process (whereby zero represented mostly individual political action (options a and b of the survey question), and one represented mostly collective political action (options c and d of the survey question)).

Finally, the variable used to measure respondents' political tactics was created from survey questions inviting respondents to indicate on a five-point scale (ranging from never to frequently) how often they used different types of tactics. The possible options included (a) participating in face-to-face meetings with policy-makers, (b) contributing to public consultations, (c) issuing position papers and technical briefs, (d) participating in EU level working groups, (e) conducting media campaigns in support of

Table 2. Time orientation versus engagement with policy-makers

Time orientation		Engagement with policy-makers		
		Transactional	Relational	Total
Short-term	Count	26	44	70
orientated culture	% within engagement	76.5%	44.9%	53.0%
Long-term	Count	8	54	62
orientated culture	% within engagement	23.5%	55.1%	47.0%
Total	Count	34	98	132
	% of total	25.8%	74.2%	100.0%

their policy concerns, and (f) organising/sponsoring events to draw attention to their policy issues. The average frequencies with which managers engaged in each of these different forms of political action were subsequently used to create a variable measuring their average level of participation in the policy-making process (whereby one represented mostly information strategies; options a, b, c and d of the survey question — and one represented mostly constituency-building strategies; options e and f of the survey question).

### *Hypothesis Testing*

The relationships between the different variables were examined using cross tabulations. The cross tabulations generated from analysing the relationship between respondents' culturally-grounded time orientations and their general approach to political action are reported in Table 2.

On first glance, the data show that most of the respondents claimed to form long-term, issue-spanning relationships with policy-makers. Indeed, of the 132 survey respondents, 98 (or 74.2%) tended to engage relationally with policy-makers whilst only 34 (25.8%) tended to engage transactionally with policy-makers. However, of the 34 respondents who tended to engage transactionally with policy-makers, 26 (or 76.5%) were — as predicted — from short-term-orientated national cultures and only 8 (or 23.5%) were from long-term-orientated national cultures. Similarly, of the 98 respondents who tended to engage relationally with policy-makers, 54 (or 55.1%) were — as expected — from long-term orientated cultures and 44 (or 44.9%) were from short-term-orientated cultures.

A Chi-square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) indicated a significant association between the time orientation and the general approach variables,  $\chi^2(1, N = 132) = 8.87$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\phi = -.227$ . It was therefore concluded that there was support for the first hypothesis.

The cross tabulations created from analysing the relationship between respondents' culturally-conditioned preferences for acting autonomously or in groups and their level of participation in the policy-making processes are reported in Table 3.

An initial reading of the data shows that most of the survey respondents claimed to engage in individual political action. Crucially, the table shows

**Table 3.** Individualism versus level of participation in policy-making

Individualism		Participation level		
		Collective action	Individual action	Total
Collectivist culture	Count	25	50	75
	% within participation level	67.6%	52.6%	56.8%
Individualistic culture	Count	12	45	57
	% within participation level	32.4%	47.4%	43.2%
Total	Count	37	95	132
	% of total	28.0%	72.0%	100.0%

that, of the 132 respondents, 95 (or 72.0%) of the respondents' favoured individual political action whilst 37 (or 28%) tended to engage in collective political action. Of the 95 respondents who tended to engage individual political action, 50 (or 52.6%) were — contrary to expectations — from collectivist national cultures and 45 (or 47.4%) were from individualist national cultures. Of the 37 respondents who tended to engage in collective action, 25 (or 67.6%) were — as predicted — from collectivist national cultures and 12 (or 32.4%) were from individualistic national cultures. However, a Chi-square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) indicated no significant association between the individualism and the participation variables,  $\chi^2(1, N = 132) = 1.85$ ,  $p = .174$ ,  $\phi = .135$ ). Thus, the survey did not provide any significant evidence in support of the second hypothesis.

Finally, the data used to analyse the relationship between respondents' culturally-conditioned attitudes power hierarchy and inequality and their use of political tactics is reported in Table 4.

On first glance, the data show that the majority of respondents use information strategies to influence policy-makers. Indeed, of the 132 survey respondents, 105 (79.5%) tended to use information strategies whilst only 27 (or 20.5%) tended to use constituency-building strategies. A more detailed analysis of the data exposed evidence in support of the third

**Table 4.** Power-distance versus political tactics used

Power distance		Tactics used		
		Constituency building	Information strategies	Total
Power-distance rejecting culture	Count	20	50	70
	% within tactics used	74.1%	47.6%	53.0%
Power-distance accepting culture	Count	7	55	62
	% within tactics used	25.9%	52.4%	47.0%
Total	Count	27	105	132
	% of total	20.5%	79.5%	100.0%

groups of hypotheses. Crucially, of the 105 respondents whose use of political tactics tends towards information strategies, 55 (or 52.4%) are — as hypothesised — from power–distance accepting national cultures whilst 50 (or 47.6%) are from power–distance rejecting national cultures. Likewise, of the 27 survey respondents who tend to use constituency-building strategies, the vast majority ( $n = 20$ , or 74.1%) are from power–distance rejecting cultures. Only 7 (or 25.9%) of respondents who tend to use constituency-building strategies are from power–distance accepting cultures.

A Chi-square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) indicated a significant association between respondents' power distance scores and their preferred choice of political tactics,  $\chi^2(1, N = 132) = 5.019$ ,  $p = .025$ ,  $\phi = .214$ . Thus, it was concluded that there is support for the third hypothesis.

## Findings and Discussion

These findings contribute to ongoing debates regarding whether the processes of European integration are leading to common interest representation behaviours in Brussels. By applying Hillman and Hitt's taxonomy of corporate political action to the political context of the European Union, the research exposes a specific area where culturally-grounded traditions in interest representation appear to be converging towards a common European model. Essentially, it was found that survey respondents had a stronger preference for individual action, irrespective of whether they were socialised in individualistic or collectivist national cultures. This finding points to some degree of convergence in managers' level of participation in the EU policy-making process, and adds weight to the thesis advanced amongst others by Kohler-Koch and Buth (2009) that we might be witnessing in Brussels the professionalization of a special elite of lobbyists which has learned the specific rules of interest representation on the European political stage.

However, whereas these two authors focus on the case of NGOs and find that they follow the same strategy of collective action, the research reported here trains its attention on the government affairs managers of large firms and suggests that they, for the most part, consider individual political action to be a more natural channel for representing their firms' interests in Brussels. This finding challenges a commonly-held view, as discussed by Coen (1998), (2007) and Eising (2007), that large firms, when lobbying in Brussels, Brussels tend to follow a common strategy of *collective* action because this is what representatives in the EU and its institutions expect.

Specifically, the finding demonstrates that there are some congruencies and similarities in EU lobbying strategies, but that the nature of these congruencies differs between different sets of lobbying actors, chiefly government affairs managers, firms and associations. Companies as collective entities and EU level business associations, as analysed by Eising (2007), and NGOs in Brussels, as studied by Kohler-Koch and Buth (2009), have been shown to follow a double route of both collective action and



individual action. The research reported here, however, suggests that the government affairs managers located in Brussels have learned to adopt a different vision of their surroundings compared to their firms: They appear to consider it their *raison d'être* to pursue individual political action as a supplement to their employers' need to also follow collective political action. Being part of the Brussels elite, government affairs managers will usually be oriented towards long-term, issue-spanning relationships with policy-makers, trustworthiness often obtained through many years of professional relations being one of the prime prerequisites of successful lobbying.

Any convergence towards a European model of interest representation should not be overestimated given that the findings of the research also highlight specific areas where culturally-grounded traditions in lobbying persist. Essentially, there were found to be significant relationships between (1) respondents' culturally-grounded attitudes towards time and their level of engagement with policy-makers, and (2) their culturally-conditioned attitudes towards power and hierarchy and their choice of political tactics when seeking to promote their political interests. These findings are in line with other scholars (e.g., Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 1999; Wilts 2002; Quittkat 2006; Kluever 2010) who claim that, in the EU context, lobbying is marked by some degree of convergence, but also by continued divergence based on national traditions.

By connecting the literatures of political science and strategic management, the research findings also engage with research conducted in other disciplines. The results are interesting for scholars of CPA insofar as they suggest that existing theoretical accounts of CPA provides only an incomplete picture of the factors determining managers' political objectives and strategies. For example, the link identified between (1) managers' preferences for short-term and long-term strategic planning, and (2) their choice of relational or transactional approach to CPA challenges the work of Hillman (2003), who argues that such choices are determined by firms' dependence on governments, the political system in which they operate, or the diversification of their product offerings.

Moreover, the finding that managers' choices of political tactics are linked to their culturally-embedded expectations regarding decision-making processes challenges existing research suggesting that managers pursue information strategies because they wish to convey factual information to key decision-makers (e.g., Getz 1993), or because government officials depend on their information and expertise (e.g., Mahoney 2007). It also enriches research arguing that managers engage in constituency building to create credibility with individual policy-makers (e.g., Coen 1999) or to generate additional support for their concerns (e.g., Keim and Zeithaml 1986).

The research findings are specifically relevant for scholars engaged with the cultural dimensions of corporate political action in international contexts. Essentially, the relationships found between (1) managers' culturally-grounded attitudes towards time and their level of engagement with policy-makers, and (2) their culturally-conditioned attitudes towards power and hierarchy and their choice of political tactics

when seeking to promote their political interests, add weight to the conceptual model developed by Barron (2010) suggesting links between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the different components of corporate political action.

## Conclusions

The aim of the research reported here was to investigate whether there are significant cultural differences in the objectives and practices of government affairs managers, and whether these differences can be explained in terms of national culture.

This objective was achieved insofar as survey data collected from the political representatives of large firms working in Brussels, and interrogated using Hofstede's cultural dimensions, revealed possible relationships between national culture and different components of corporate political activity. Specifically, there appears to be linkages between (1) managers' culturally-grounded attitudes towards time and their level of engagement with policy-makers, and (2) their culturally-conditioned attitudes towards power and hierarchy and their choice of political tactics when seeking to promote their political interests. Contrary to expectations, however, no significant relationship was found between respondents' cultural preferences for acting autonomously or within a group, and their level of participation in the policy-making process.

Two specific limitations of the research are openly acknowledged. First, the survey rendered a low response rate, meaning that the significance of these findings should not be overstated. Given that potential informants were reluctant to participate in our research, possibly as explained above because the economic and financial climate within which they were operating gave them little time to do so, any future surveys would benefit from being conducted once economic and financial stability has been re-established. In addition, the conceptual model underpinning the research draws exclusively on the cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede (2001). Scholars, however, have charged these dimensions with reducing the complexities of national culture to simplistic and overly generalised conceptualisations and for magnifying national stereotypes (e.g., Shenkar 2001; Holden 2002; McSweeney 2002; Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson 2006; Taras, Rowney, and Steel 2009). Consequently, future research could incorporate theoretical insights from other, richer cultural categorisation studies (e.g., Schwartz 1992). That being said, incorporating a wider range of cultural dimensions could potentially lead to the situation, as highlighted by Taras, Rowney, and Steel 2009, whereby cross-cultural research frameworks become unworkably bulky.

It is also possible that the impact of national culture on managers' strategic decision-making in the political arena may be tempered by other factors that were not covered in the survey. For example, managers' political strategies may also be influenced by their firms' corporate cultures, by the degree of autonomy that they enjoy to devise and implement their firms' political strategies, and by their education and training pathways. Thus,

future research could be undertaken to assess the respective weight of these different factors on managers' political strategies.

## References

- Barron, A. 2010. Unlocking the mindsets of government affairs managers: cultural dimensions of corporate political activity. *Cross Cultural Management — An International Journal* 17, no. 2: 101–17.
- Boddewyn, J., and T. Brewer. 1994. International business political behavior: new theoretical directions. *Academy of Management Review* 19, no. 1: 119–44.
- Bulmer, S., and M. Burch. 1998. Organising for Europe: Whitehall, the British State and the European Union. *Public Administration* 76, no. 4: 601–28.
- Bunel, J. 1995. *La transformation de la représentation patronale en France: CNPF et CGPME* Paris: Commissariat général du plan.
- Cai, A., R. Wilson, and E. Drake. 2006. Culture in the context of intercultural negotiation: individualism–collectivism and paths to integrative agreements. *Human Communication Research* 26, no. 4: 591–617.
- Carr, C., and S. Harris. 2004. The impact of diverse national values on strategic investment decisions in the context of globalization. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 4, no. 1: 77–99.
- Child, J. 2000. Theorising about organisation cross-nationally. *Advances in Comparative International Management* 13, no. 1: 27–77.
- Coen, D. 1998. The European business interest and the nation state: large-firm lobbying in the European Union and member states. *Journal of Public Policy* 18, no. 1: 75–100.
- Coen, D. 1999. The impact of US lobbying practice on the European business-government relationship. *California Management Review* 41, no. 4: 27–44.
- Coen, D. 2007. Empirical and theoretical studies in EU lobbying. *Journal of European Public Policy* 14, no. 3: 333–45.
- Cole, A., and H. Drake. 2000. The Europeanization of French polity: continuity, change, and adaptation. *Journal European Public Policy* 7, no. 1: 26–43.
- Cowles, M.G., J. Caporaso, and T. Risse. 2001. *Transforming Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 138–59.
- DiMaggio, P.J., and W.W. Powell. 1983. The iron cage revisited: institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review* 48, 147–60.
- Drake, L.E. 2001. The culture-negotiation link — integrative and distributive bargaining through an intercultural communication lens. *Human Communication Research* 27, no. 3: 317–49.
- Eising, R. 2003. Policy learning in embedded negotiations — explaining EU electricity liberalisation. *International Organization* 56, no. 1: 85–120.
- Eising, R. 2007. The access of business interests to EU institutions: towards élite pluralism? *Journal of European Public Policy* 14, no. 3: 384–403.
- Erez, M. 1994. Toward a model of cross-cultural industrial and organisational psychology. In *Handbook of industrial and organisational psychology*, ed. H.C. Triandis, M.D. Dunnette, and L.M. Hough, 569–607. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Fairbrass, J., and A. Jordan. 2002. Interest representation and Europeanization: the case of UK environment policy. In *Integrating interests in the European Union: the new politics of persuasion, advocacy and influence*, ed. A. Warleigh and J. Fairbrass. London: Europa.
- Getz, K.A. 1993. Corporate political tactics in a principal-agent context — an investigation in ozone protection policy. In *Research in corporate social performance and policy*, ed. J.E. Post, 19–55. Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Getz, K.A. 1997. Research in corporate political action — integration and assessment. *Business and Society* 36, no. 1: 32–72.
- Getz, K.A. 2001. Public affairs and political strategy: theoretical foundations. *Journal of Public Affairs* 2, no. 1: 305–29.
- Harris, S., and P.N. Ghauri. 2000. Strategy formation by business leaders — exploring the influence of national values. *European Journal of Marketing* 34, no. 1/2: 126–41.
- Harris, P.R., R.T. Moran, and S.V. Moran. 2006. *Managing cultural differences — global leadership strategies for the twenty-first century*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

- Heritier, A., D. Kerwer, C. Knill, D. Lehmkuhl, M. Teutsch, and A.C. Douillet. 2001. *Differential Europe: the European Union impact on national policy-making*. Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Hillman, A. 2003. Determinants of political strategies in US multinationals. *Business and Society* 42, no. 4: 455–84.
- Hillman, A.J., and M.A. Hitt. 1999. Corporate political strategy formulation — a model of approach, participation and strategy decisions. *Academy of Management Review* 24, no. 4: 825–42.
- Hillman, A.J., G.D. Keim, and D. Schuler. 2004. Corporate political activity — a review and research agenda. *Journal of Management* 30, no. 6: 837–57.
- Hofstede, G. 2001. *Culture's consequences — international differences in work-related values*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, G., and M.H. Bond. 1988. The Confucius connection — from cultural roots to economic growth. *Organizational Dynamics* 16, no. 4: 4–21.
- Holden, N. 2002. *Cross-cultural management — a knowledge management perspective*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- House, R.J., P.J. Hanges, M. Javidan, P.W. Dorfman, and V. Gupta. 2004. *Culture, leadership and organisations — the GLOBE study of 62 societies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kassim, H., and A. Menon. 1996. *The European Union and national industrial policy*. London: Routledge.
- Keim, G.D., and C.P. Zeithaml. 1986. Corporate political strategy and legislative decision making — a review and contingency approach. *Academy of Management Review* 11, no. 4: 828–43.
- Kennedy, S. 2008. *The business of lobbying in China*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kirkman, B.L., K.B. Lowe, and C.B. Gibson. 2006. A quarter century of culture's consequences: a review of empirical research incorporating Hofstede's cultural values framework. *Journal of International Business Studies* 37, no. 3: 285–320.
- Cluever, H. 2010. Europeanization of lobbying activities: when national interest groups spill over to the European level. *Journal of European Integration* 32, no. 2: 175–91.
- Kohler-Koch, B. 1997. The evolution of organized interests in the EC — driving forces, co-evolution or new type of governance. In *Participation and policy making in the European Union*, ed. H. Wallace and A. Young, 42–68. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kohler-Koch, B., and V. Buth. 2009. *Civil society in EU governance — lobby groups like any other?* Bremen: University of Bremen.
- Kohler-Koch, B., and C. Quittkat. 1999. *Intermediation of interests in the European Union*. Working Paper, Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung, Nr. 9/99.
- Ladrech, R. 2001. Europeanization and French social democracy. *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 3, no. 1: 37–48.
- Lanzalaco, L. 1992. Coping with heterogeneity: peak associations of business within and across western European nations. In *Organized interests and the European Community*, ed. J. Greenwood, J. Grote and K. Ronit, 172–205. London: Sage Publications.
- Lehmkuhl, D. 2000. Under stress: Europeanization and trade associations in the member states. *EIOP* 4, no. 14.
- Leung, K., B. Rabi, N. Buchan, M. Erez, and C. Gibson. 2005. Culture and international business: recent advances and their implications for future research. *Journal of International Business Studies* 36, no. 4: 357–78.
- Mahoney, C. 2007. Networking versus allying: the decision of interest groups to join coalitions in the US and the EU. *Journal of European Public Policy* 14, no. 3: 366–83.
- Mazey, S., and J. Richardson. 1993. Introduction: transference of power, decision rules, and the rules of the game. In *Lobbying in the European Community*, ed. S. Mazey and J. Richardson, 3–26. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McSweeney, B. 2002. Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: a triumph of faith — a failure of analysis. *Human Relations* 55, no. 10: 89–118.
- Oliver, C. 1991. Strategic responses to institutional processes. *Academy of Management Review* 16, no. 1: 145–79.
- Quittkat, C. 2006. *Europäisierung der Interessenvermittlung: Französische Wirtschaftsverbände zwischen Beständigkeit und Wandel*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Sagie, A., and M. Koslowsky. 2000. *Participation and empowerment in organizations — modelling, effectiveness and applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Salacuse, J.W. 1998. Ten ways that culture affects negotiating style — some survey results. *Negotiation Journal* 14, no. 3: 221–40.
- Schein, E.H. 1985. *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Schmidt, V.A. 1996. Loosening the ties that bind: the impact of European integration on French government and its relationship to business. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 34, no. 2: 223–54.
- Schmidt, V. 1999. National patterns of governance under siege — the impact of European integration. In *The transformation of governance in the European Union*, ed. B. Kohler-Koch and R. Eising, 155–72. London: Routledge.
- Schneider, S.C. 1989. Strategy formulation — the impact of national culture. *Organization Studies* 10, no. 2: 148–68.
- Schuler, D.A., and K. Rehbein. 1997. The filtering role of the firm in corporate political involvement. *Business and Society* 36, no. 2: 116–39.
- Schwartz, S.H. 1992. Universals in the content and structure of values: theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 25, 1–65.
- Selznick, P. 1957. *Leadership in administration — a sociological interpretation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Shenkar, O. 2001. Cultural distance revisited — towards a more rigorous conceptualization and measurement of cultural differences. *Journal of International Business Studies* 32, no. 3: 519–36.
- Stevens, A. 2003. *The government and politics of France*. London: St Martin's Press.
- Taras, V., J. Rowney, and P. Steel. 2009. Half a century of measuring culture — review of approaches, challenges, and limitations based on the analysis of 121 instruments for quantifying culture. *Journal of International Management* 15, no. 4: 357–73.
- Triandis, H.C. 1994. Cross-cultural industrial and organisational psychology. In *Handbook of industrial and organisational psychology*, ed. H.C. Triandis, M.D. Dunnette and L.M. Hough, 103–72. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Trompenaars, F., and C. Hampden-Turner. 1997. *Riding the waves of culture*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Waarden, F. 1993. Über die Beständigkeit nationaler Politikstile und Politiknetzwerke. Eine Studie über die Genese ihrer institutionellen Verankerung. In *Verhandlungsdemokratie, Interessenvermittlung, Regierbarkeit. Festschrift für Gerhard Lehmbruch*, ed. R. Czada and M.G. Schmidt, 191–212. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Wilson, F.L. 1988. *Interest group politics in France*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wilts, A. 2002. Strategies of business interest associations in the Netherlands and Germany: European priorities or domestic concerns? *Politique européenne* 7, 96–115.
- Wright, V. 1997. Introduction — la fin du dirigisme? *Modern and Contemporary France* 5, no. 2: 151–53.